

Testimony on Senate Bill 501
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Chair Richard Hilderbrand
March 11, 2022

Chair Hilderbrand, Vice-Chair Gossage, Ranking Minority Member Pettey, and Members of the Committee, my name is Gail Cozadd, CEO for Kansas Children's Service League. I am here today to speak in opposition to SB 501. Kansas Children's Service League (KCSL), is a private, non-profit, 501(c)3. We are the Kansas Chapter for Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA) and our mission is to "protect and promote the well-being of children". KCSL works every day to create, repair and restore healthy parent-child relationships which are the foundation of a strong family. In 2021 we served over 4000 children across the state of KS in our programs.

KCSL has been watching over children in the state of Kansas since 1893. We have stood side by side with parents through pandemics, through the Great Depression, through the Kansas Dust Bowl, and many other events in KS. One thing has remained true - most parents want to do better for their children-and yet many parents struggle-they need a helping hand. The help has looked different over the years but one thing has always remained consistent, the need to access concrete supports.

Research has further determined there are five protective factors which help ensure the prevention of child abuse and neglect. One of those factors, concrete supports, includes a parent's ability to meet basic needs of food, shelter, education, and health services. While KCSL does not provide access to these concrete supports, our programs assist parents in locating community resources-including food and medical assistance through the state. Many of the children and families who initially come to KCSL are faced with food insecurity. Food insecurity is a state of being without **reliable** access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food and is most often experienced by children living in poverty. Children who experience food insecurity are often sicker and more likely to be hospitalized. They also experience developmental impairments which may limit their physical, intellectual, or emotional development. Further children who have consistent access to concrete supports, including food, are more likely to graduate high school, earning more as an adult, and relying less on government welfare as an adult.

I am here today asking you to oppose this burdensome legislation for children and families in KS who directly benefit from the food assistance program. In addition, if this legislation were to move forward, the increase in government spending to provide the necessary oversight is burdensome and costly to taxpayers in Kansas. Finally, I do not believe churches or community programs have the capacity to meet the demand for families who may be negatively impacted by this legislation-causing further unintended consequences for children living in poverty in KS.

-Gail Cozadd, CEO
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